Retro #29: Weightlifting Takes Off at SSC

Introduced by four students at SSC in 1950, weightlifting quickly grew in popularity to become an officially sanctioned school club.

Protesting Pool Players Converted Into Weightlifters And Strongmen

by Gerald Shields

The echoes of grunts and clanging steel are now heard along with "red!" and "six in the side!" since the strongboys of St. Stanislaus took over part of the pool-room for their own use and to harbor their barbells and dumb-bells.

At first the weightlifters found themselves entering unwelcome territory but in short time friendship was established and even a few of the pool players were soon converted to the sport that's here to stay.

The boys that introduced weightlifting here are four: Walter Lyttle, Juan Echeverria, Ruben Mansur, and Gerald Shields. As of now, only two months later, more than thirty boys use the weights.

The Rock-A-Chaw

April 4, 1950

Twenty years later in the 1970s the St. Stanislaus Weightlifting Club (SSWLC) averaged 65-70 members who worked to increase their size, strength, and self-confidence in keeping with the philosophy of a sound mind in a sound body. In 1972 the SSWLC under the guidance of Br. Bennet Bishop hosted the SAAU Mississippi Open Power Lift for the 6th time. A highlight of the meet occurred when national champion Joseph "Doc" Rhodes, SSC class of '65, set an unofficial world record totaling 1600 pounds.

Br. Bennet presents outstanding lifter award to Joseph "Doc" Rhodes, class of '65. In the 165 lb class, he totaled 1600 lbs to set and unofficial world record in powerlifting. from *Reflections* Yearbook 1972, p. 77

In 1974 the team won the Mississippi State Novice Meet and took second place in the state meet in 1975.

Below: Our winning team at the Mississippi State Novice Meet (l to r) Jay Heitzman, Matt Romito, Clay Chetta, Bro. Roy Wittendorfer.

Reflections Yearbook 1975, p 62

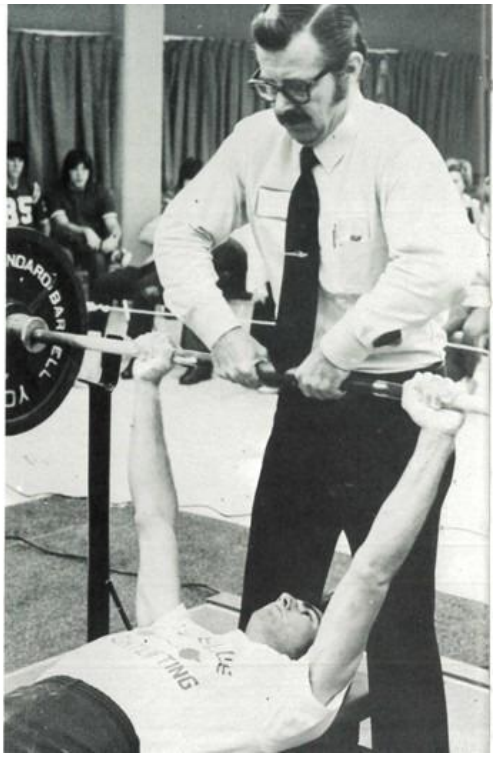
Reflections Yearbook 1975

Weightlifting Team Places at Meets

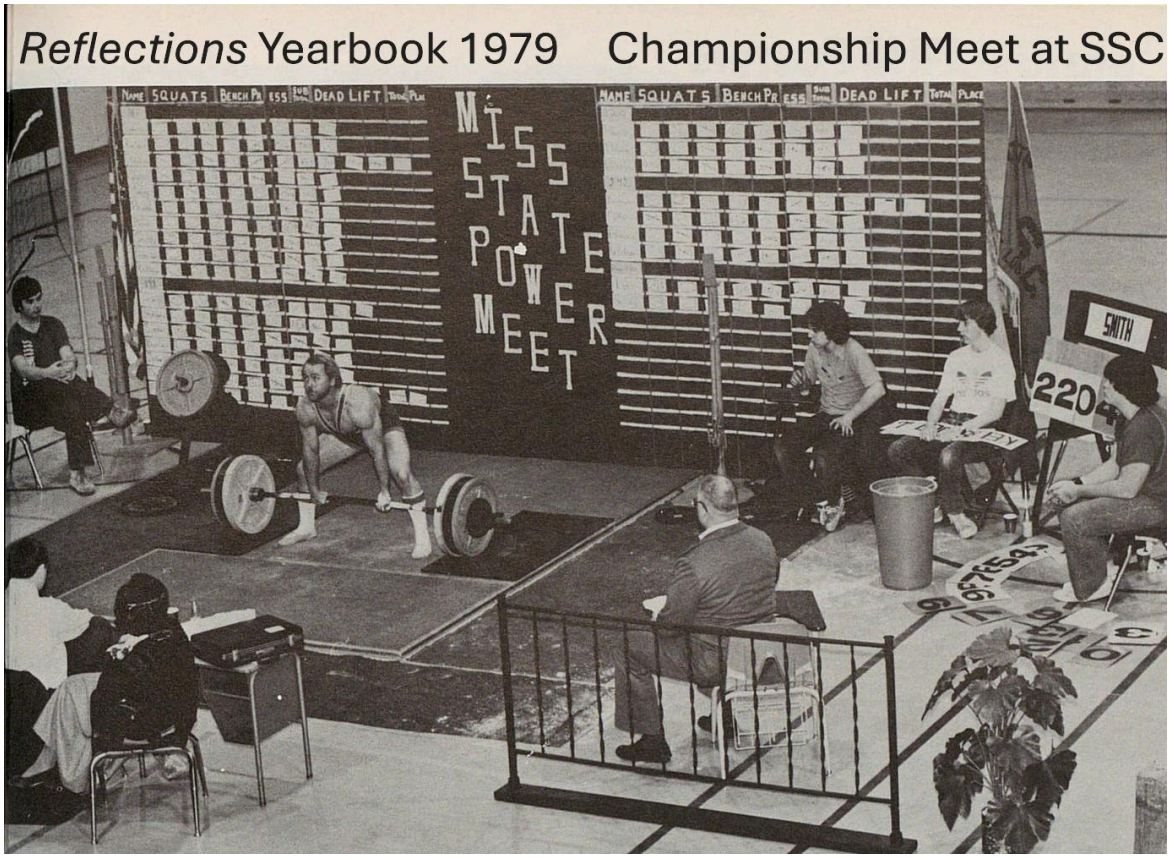
Saint Stanislaus' Weightlifting Club, now in its sixth year of operation, is one of the most modern and best equipped facilities found in any high school. In the past year alone, 200 pounds of weights and five different exercise units have been added to the club.

Under the able guidance of Brother Bennet, the club coach and moderator, the team won the Mississippi State Novice Meet in October 1974, placed second in the Junior Powerlift Meet sponsored by the New Orleans Police Department in November 1974, and took second place in the Mississippi State Meet in March 1975. This last meet was sponsored by the St. Stanislaus Weightlifting Club for the sixth time. Members of this team include students Clay Chetta and Matt Romito, former students Jay Heitzman, graduates John Ludlow and Mike Blaize, and Brother Roy Wittendorfer.

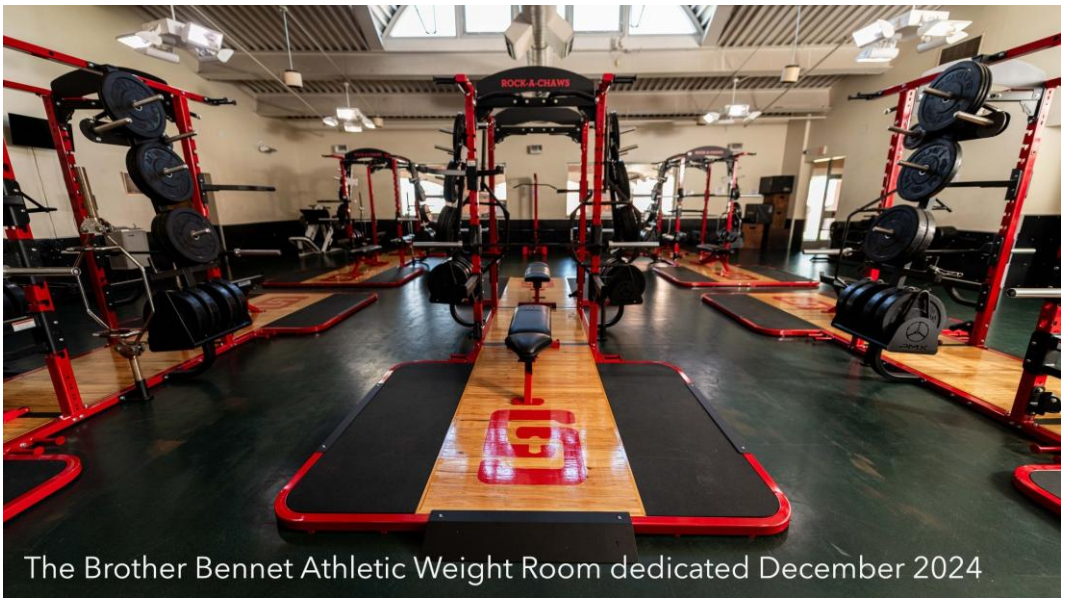
Right: Bro. Bennet spots Matt Romito on the bench press exercise.



In 1979 SSC hosted AAU Senior National Power Lift Championship, a two-day meet featuring the top 10% lifters in the U.S. NBC television broadcasted the event nationwide since the lifters represented 29 different states.


Reflections Yearbook 1979 Championship Meet at SSC
NAME SQUATS BENCH PRESS DEAD LIFT TOTAL PLACE
MISS STATE POWER MEET
NAME SQUATS BENCH PRESS DEAD LIFT TOTAL PLACE
SMITH
220

Building on such a strong foundation, today's weightlifters at SSC carry on the tradition and enjoy the modern state-of-the-art facilities. Last December the school dedicated a newly renovated Br. Bennet Athletic Weight Room with new racks, benches, bars, and weights. The room serves as a hub for students to build physical strength, confidence, and character—the same values that those first four students back in 1950 championed.



The Brother Bennet Athletic Weight Room dedicated December 2024